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STUDIES IN FURNITURE DESIGN.

SIXTH PARALLEL—ROMANESQUE.—CELTIC.

THE indefinite appellation of Romanesque it is rather difficult to localize in any one place or date, and it can be regarded, with the same character of architecture, as a corruption of the Roman, modified or elaborated, as the case might be, by the requirements of the different countries appropriating it. It might be regarded as a phase of medievalism, varying in its details and form as it came under the control of the several sects and of the multitudinous peoples. The Byzantine Romanesque we have, perhaps, more to do with in the consideration of this present Parallel than of its other branches. Some of its peculiarities will be noticed in our drawing—the arched top, and the general massive look of the entire piece.

Wood was the constructive material of the Romanesque form, and carving was indulged in liberally, much of it being well concealed symbols—meanings entirely at variance with the apparent interpretation of the flower or fruit, or even human heads, that marked this style. In architecture posts and beams were traced over with a series of carved ornaments, representative either of holy subjects, or, as the Romanesque became less intimately associated with church affairs, local incidents, and events in local history. This general employment of wood for both constructive purposes naturally created a similarity between outside and inside finishings, and furniture partook strongly of the architectural in its appearance. Panels and posts were liberally used wherever large sunken surfaces were employed, as in coffers or chests, at the end of church pews, or on benches in large buildings. The ordinary window tracery of this style transferred to the wood, and the Gothic, one of the outgrowths of the Romanesque, were favorite ornamental forms for panels. Buttresses and pinnacles were often placed on the angles or divisions between the panels.

"As in Italy, so in England, France, Germany, and later in Spain, the splendor hitherto devoted to the glory of ecclesiastical furniture, utensils, or architectural decoration, was gradually adopted in the royal and other castles and houses. State rooms, halls of justice, sets of rooms for the use of the king or his barons were furnished and maintained. The large religious establishments also demanded the skill of artists and workmen, and, to a greater extent, north than south of the Alps. Many monastic houses in the north of Europe were seats of feudal jurisdiction. These communities executed great works in wood, stall-work, presses, etc., as large and continuous societies alone are able to carry through tasks that want much time for completion. All this helped to encourage the manufacture of wood-work of the finest kind. Hence the medieval semi-ecclesiastical character maintained sway in every art connected with architecture and furniture longer in northern countries than in Italy, where both old traditions and monumental remains recalled rather the glories of antique art, and where the revival of classic learning, with classic art and classic feeling, had begun."

The semi-ecclesiastical character is one of the features of the Romanesque, and our quotation may, in a measure, explain this.

The ingenuity and raciness of the smaller figure carving, both in stall-work of churches and on the tops and fronts of boxes and caskets, in panel work of cabinets or doors, etc., during the last half of the fifteenth century, are scarcely surpassed. Carvers in all kinds of wood furniture and decoration of houses delighted in doubling their figures into quaint and ingenious attitudes.

The use of tapestry in the Romanesque style of furnishing was indulged in, in fact, we may go back almost to the period when the Romanesque was popular and find tapestry munificently employed. Mr. Pollen quotes Froissart in giving an account of the entry into Paris of Isabel of Bavaria in 1313, when the whole street of St. Denis "was covered with a canopy of rich camlet and silk

have been to aim at simplicity of subject with grotesque treatment when that subject was taken from the animal species; in the treatment of floral designs, however, nature was closely imitated. These features are indicated in our illustration.

The poverty of the Celts has become proverbial, but that they were ignorant of the arts, or insensible to their influence, could scarcely have been possible with men, very many of whom—Romans, Gauls, and Britons—were educated where those arts, though they had become, in a certain measure, debased, were still cultivated; and there is not only historical evidence to show that even many of the priests in those early times obtained celebrity as artificers and makers of the implements necessary in their church and as illuminators of books, but there is also excellent reason to believe that their skill in fabricating croziers, bells, shrines, and furniture, in addition to their treat-

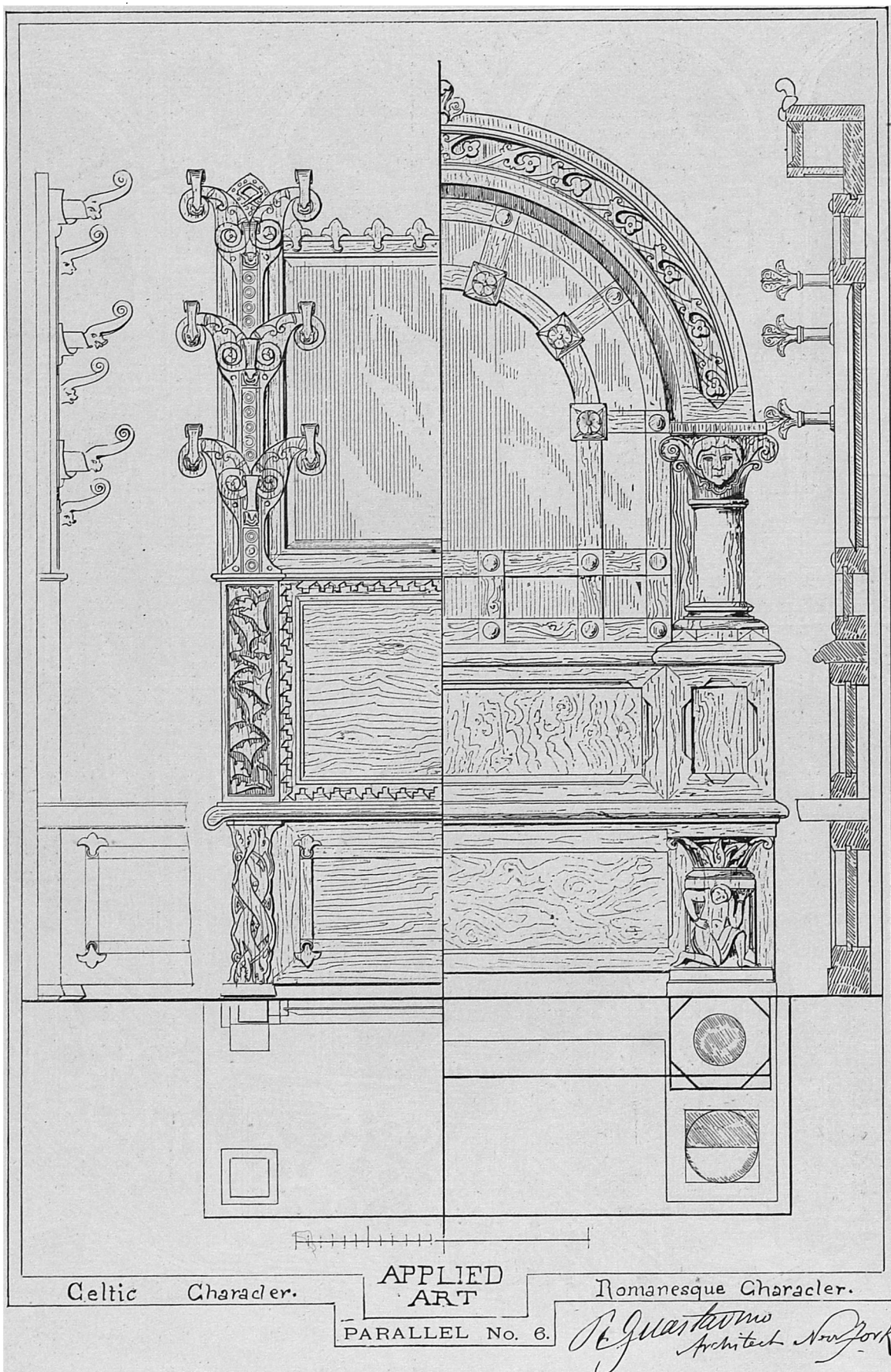
ment of manuscripts, could be very favorably compared with much of the work done upon the Continent. It is, indeed, by no means improbable, that the severe simplicity, as well as the uniformity of plan and size which characterized both their buildings and their minor productions, was less the result of poverty or ignorance than of choice, originating in the spirit of their faith or a veneration for some model given to them by their first teachers.

The three artificers of St. Patrick were Asicus, Biteus, and Tassoeh, and they were said to have been wonderfully facile in their designing and execution. Thus, also, is the life of the celebrated artificer St. Dageus, who flourished in the early part of the sixth century. It is stated that he fabricated all manner of church furniture, and that though some were without ornament, others were covered with gold, silver, and precious stones in an ingenious and admirable manner. In like manner the memory of Coula, a celebrated artificer in brass, of the fifth or sixth century, is preserved as the manufacturer of a shrine remarkable for its beauty, which was still at Dun Cruthen, near the eastern shore of Lough Foyle, in the present county of Londonderry, about the commencement of the sixteenth century.

Shrines of the most perfect workmanship were the local pride of individual churches, and they served as receptacles for the relics of their founders. These shrines were frequently the object of robberies, when factions warred with each other (as occurred even in Ireland in those days); these shrines were plundered and carted away, and the fine woodwork was sold, from which we can infer that there was considerable value attached to them aside from the veneration with which they were

regarded; in fact, in the annals of the Four Masters, of the year 796, it is related that the relics of St. Ronan, son of Berach, were put into an ark or shrine which was ornamented with gold and silver; and the Annals of Ulster, of the year, 799, mention the placing of the relics of St. Colaeth bishop of Kildare, in a shrine of gold and silver.

The hall-racks shown in our illustration should be entirely of wood, no metal whatever being necessary in the construction; the upper centres are beveled mirrors, and the panels below beveled. The wood is preferably oak, ash may be employed and the ornamentation should consist exclusively of carving.



cloths, as if they had the cloths for nothing, or were at Alexandria or Damascus. I (the writer of this account) was present, and was astonished whence such quantities of rich stuffs and ornaments could have come, for all the houses on each side of the street of St. Denis, as far as the Chatélet, or, indeed, to the great bridge, were hung with tapestries, representing various scenes and histories, to the delight of all beholders."

The artistic skill of the early Celts is indicated to us almost exclusively by the remains of church architecture and church furniture. The round towers of Ireland contain some admirable examples of Celtic ornamentation. Their desire seems to